



Retracing

Our
Steps

to
Utopia

Tom
Carrada

. . . you nevertheless go on, walking towards utopia.

- Marguerite Young

I.

You scripted our combinations, our permutations,
the typography of us as mother tongue,
following birds and Simon and Garfunkel,
retracing our steps to Utopia.

You played the audience with your seasoned self
ordering room service with another's voice:

Where have you gone Joe DiMaggio?

Your wings became alternative mysteries
dissected, examined, reassembled
into what we dubbed *The New Next*.
Or so we thought. But then
someone was shaken down, and the clock reset.

II.

The symphonies continue to symphony,
memorializing cloud banks
that rolled in with the coffee.

*Have you finished looking at the photos
in the Warhol-like box?*

Pedaling along the shaded streets you slow

to admire a tiny fresco of woolgatherers.
You know they know.

The page curls, so too the rigmarole of the encounter.
A collage of texts interrupts.
With this humidity, you begin to rethink
the line drawings.
This zero tolerance thing is tough to play.

So, tell me again, who said your take was "spot on"?

III.

And now you're inventorying survival gear
as if your past lives left instructions
on the answering machine
rekindling memories that years ago
provided you solace for something or other,
for what, exactly, I can't remember.
The clock's face again pokes in,
disregarding my previous comment,
awash with remorse.
I'm trying to reconstitute myself as another -
another with tickets to a double-header.
Nothing better to short-circuit unhappiness.
Not unlike us, yes?
Off-hours, you choreograph untried virtues,
tweaking missteps to captivate.

I backpedal. Indifferent.
How will you write this up in the final hour? -
the final hour,
when, distracted by claims of melodies,
you will be assisted by members of the alphabet
selected at random from drive-bys.
You'd think by now they'd be as encumbered
as you and I.

IV.

The miniaturist in you argues
for further downsizing:
the shoot skewed
bottlenecked with citations from the OED
your last run-through a wrong turn
over the top,
PowerPointed no less.
Breathe in. Breathe out.
I've learned not to doubt much.
Not to doubt the power of the costume.
The power of the makeover.
Walking in on reservations.
The differences.
Butz, your two-year-old poodle, knows.
He's been channeling Schopenhauer
on his afternoon constitutionals:

Hi-diddle-dee-dee
The best is yet to be. . . .

V.

Whoever has no house now, will never have one.
Whoever is alone will stay alone, will sit,
read, write long letters through the evening.
and wander along the boulevards, up and down,
restlessly, . . .

- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Autumn Day*

Your enthusiasm follows the plot
of matching neckties.
I would like to have thought otherwise
but you unfold as expected
as items on a grocery list
which falls out of your pocket
as you bend into your seductions
connecting the dots between us.
The distance halved again and again and again.
The point lost among footnotes.
The letter-writer writing long letters
into the night,
struck inarticulate, caught off-guard,
wandering the boulevards, up and down,
restlessly.

VI.

Ghosts of the silver screen populate your jottings:
the time-traveler as long distance runner,
no longer worrying the endgame.
When to appreciate the mirror's music?
To press the reset button?
You begin scrapbooking your gazes
blue penciling ads in fashion magazines
as an homage to the mooring of starting out.
This time you will not be unhinged by reflections
of your former selves -
a good thing - big and leggy and good.

VII.

...most people come to know only one corner of their room.

- Rainer Maria Rilke

To know more than one corner of your room.
To see yourself as you were 10, 20, 30, 40 years ago.
Or as you would like to think you were.
How you adjusted the lens to correct the distortion.
To ease the passage.
We've all made that mistake.
The angles spellbinding, infectious with singsong.
The comings and goings.
The melodies familiar and unfamiliar,

mixing with the then and now,
growing fainter with each season.
The inertia left flopping around in the culvert.
You are about all that matters
notwithstanding anything.

VIII.

Each rewrite hazards an equation,
irrespective of the aftermath
which enters the room as an attraction.
But I thought we had agreed.
Well, yes, my mistake.
The flight leaves in two hours.
You have just enough time to learn your lines.
Just enough time to re-sketch your image.
Not to worry.
The world as furrowed brow.
Think of the indecipherables and ephemera,
all eBayed.
Does it matter?
Did you even know they were missing?

IX.

Your accusation is a bit fuzzy
but I'll wear it anyway

like a noisy suit of armor scarred from battle.
The moment keeps recycling.
Groundhog Day's petty palette of inconveniences.
You could have at least given me the heads-up.
Do you believe in magic?
Of course you do.
My blindside rutted with trespass.
Again? Did you say "again"?

X.

The dance, of course. Always the dance.
And the new steps.
Always the new steps.
Taking notes.
Out of habit?
Trying to recall the sequence.
How we got from there to here.
How we got to where we are.
How we came to know.
You too have become curiouser and curiouser.
And now the fourth quarter.
Out of time-outs.
Out of recaps.
The dress rehearsal scrapped.
The rainbow's armature ascending.
The grammar ungagged.



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